

The Christian Family Living Together

Studies by Geoffrey Bingham

STUDY ONE:	“The Father and the Family”
STUDY TWO:	“The Whole Family Comes Together”
STUDY THREE:	“The Family of God Lives & Loves Together
STUDY FOUR:	“Our Family Life”
STUDY FIVE:	“The Family of the Future: The Future of the Family

NOTE:– It is hoped that folk will read ahead in these studies and then seek to find their answers to the questions relating to each study.

STUDY ONE: THE FATHER AND THE FAMILY

1. God is Father.

Passage:– Ephesians 1:1–14. C f. Ephesians 3:14–15, 4:6.

Other Scriptures:– I Corinthians 8:5–6, Matthew 23:1–12, Ephesians 4:1–6.

The principle of the universe is God is Father: Jesus is Lord. Note John 16:12–15: this made known by the Spirit. Cf. Galatians 4:4–6, Romans 8:13–15, Matthew 10:20.

2. God as Creator–Father.

(i) See Acts 17:24–30, Luke 3:38, Matthew 5:43–48. Romans 1:19ff shows His nature in creation.

(ii) Man abdicates from creational sonship. Genesis 3:1–10, Romans 1:18–32.

(iii) God is Father to His covenant people:– Exodus 4:22, Hosea 11:1, cf. Deuteronomy 32:6ff, 14:1, Jeremiah ch.3, Isaiah 63:16, 64:8, Malachi 2:10.

3. God is Redeemer–Father (cf. Isaiah 63:16).

(i) John 1:14–18, 5:17ff, 6:44–46, 8:28–29, 3:35 with Matthew 11:27. John 17:1–5, Hebrews 2:9–10.

(ii) Sermon on the Mount. Matthew chs. 5– 7.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why do we not say “God is like a Father”, but “He is Father”? Why does Jesus use the term “Your heavenly Father,” or “Your Father Who is in heaven”?
2. What is it about parents to which children most object, amongst other things? How would this relate to the refusal of the Jews (for the most part) to believe and receive the Son?
3. What is it about fatherhood, (a) Human and (b) Divine, which we need so much?

STUDY TWO: THE WHOLE FAMILY COMES TOGETHER

1. There Will be One Family.

(i) Ephesians 1:4ff. (ii) John 11:49–52. (iii) John 17:20–26.

2. The Great Division in Humanity.

(i) Principle of division. I John 3:10–18. Cf. John 15:18f.
(ii) Actual division: Jew and Gentile. Ephesians 2:11ff.

3. The Cross Brings the Family Together.

(i) John 11:51–52. (ii) Ephesians 2:11ff. (iii) Hebrews 2:9–15. N.B. The ‘Third race’ is formed.

4. The Spirit Brings the Family Together.

- (i) Principle of Fatherhood and sonship. Galatians 4:4–6. Romans 8:14–17, cf. Matthew 10:20.
- (ii) Bringing together of the Father’s family.
- (a) Principle of Household–Family. Hebrews 3:1–6, cf. Numbers 12:6–7, I Timothy 3:15, cf. Ephesians 2:18f.
 - (b) Pentecost and the Cross. The Jews, the Cross, the Spirit, forgiveness and cleansing. Cf. Ezekiel 36:24–28 (Jer. 31:31–34), cf. I Cor. 6:9–11, Acts 13:38–39, Ephesians 1:7.
 - (c) The Spirit and the people. Acts 2:1ff. The coming of true fellowship, true familyhood for the Jews.
 - (d) Samaria. Samaritans are part of the Family by the apostles and the Spirit. Acts 8: 1ff .
 - (e) Caesarea. The Gentiles come to Christ, by the Jews, through the Spirit. Acts 11: 1ff .

5. The People of God are One (Gal. 4:4–6, Gal. 3:26–29).

John 17:20–26. The love at Jerusalem, Samaria, Caesarea, Antioch. See I Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:26–29, Ephesians 4:1–6.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. From reading John 17:20ff why does Jesus pray the proclaimers and their hearers should become one? What two things will this show the world?
2. What was it that brought people together and made them one? What did Paul mean by saying in Galatians 3:28, ‘There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free; there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.’? How does (or, can) that work out in our present–day society? How should it work out in Australia?
3. What help do Christian families receive from being in the whole family of God? How do families help the Family, and the Family help the families?
4. What are the marks or characteristics of the Family of God? Do we find these today in the churches? Does culture, perhaps, alter some of these?

STUDY THREE: THE FAMILY OF GOD LIVES AND LOVES TOGETHER

1. Introduction: The Matter of Love.

John 17:20–26 shows our Lord prayed for oneness. Cf. Philippians 2:1–2, Ephesians 4:1–3, 5:1–2, Acts 2:42.

Oneness must lie in the life of Love:– Principle I John 4:19.

2. Love in the N.T.

(i) God loves us. John 3:16, I John 3:16, I John 4:9–10. Ephesians 2: 4–5

(ii) We love God. I John 4:19 – 5:3, I John 2:3–6, John 14:15, Romans 8:28, I Corinthians 2:9f. I Peter 1:8. I John 4:19. I Corinthians 16:22.

(iii) We love others. Romans 5:5, I John 2:7f, 3:10f, I John 4:19, I Peter 1:22, I Thessalonians 4:9. See also Colossians 1:8, Ephesians 1:15.

(iv) The practical love we see in the N. T. Love at Jerusalem, Samaria, Caesarea, Antioch. Love shown by the distribution, collection came for the poor, etc. Acts 2:42, 44–47, 4:32–33, 6:1ff, 11:29, I Corinthians 16:1, II Corinthians 8–9.

Notice also the care of the apostles for the churches. The care of the elders and deacons for the people as also the people's love and care for the teachers, apostles, elders, etc.

(v) The ways of love are shown.

(a) Love in relationships. I John 2:7ff, 3:10ff, I Peter 1:22. See I John 3:17–20. Love = caring and helping.

(b) What love does. I Corinthians 13:7.

(c) Love always gives. John 3:16. In Acts 2 and 4 those who loved gave everything. See II Corinthians 8: 1ff . Giving is by means of gifts.

(d) Love is shown in forgiveness. See Luke 7:47, Matthew 18:21ff, Colossians 3:12–13, Ephesians 4:31–32.

(e) Love works out in true relationships, i.e. in our Family Life. 1. I Timothy 5:1–3. 2. Ephesians 5:18 6:9. Cf. Colossians 3: 12–25.

3. Not to Love is to be Judged by God.

(i) I Corinthians 16:22. (ii) Revelation 2:1–6.

4. We Must Keep Fresh in Love.

(i) Zephaniah 3:17 (RSV). God will renew us in the love He has given (Rom. 5:5).

(ii) We must guard against our love being diminished. Matthew 24:12, II Timothy 3:4, I John 2:15f, II Timothy 4:10, II Peter 1:9.

(iii) We must keep ourselves. Jude 20–23.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What is it that makes us love God and love others?
2. In the light of I John 2: 3–6, John 14:15, II Corinthians 5:17, and I John 5: 1–3 discuss how obedience and love are related.
3. What law or laws are we expected to obey through love–motivation? See Romans 13:8–10, James 1:25, 2:8–12, Galatians 5:13–14, 6:1–2.

4. How does the living together in love work out in family relationships? In the light of the principle of Ephesians 4: 6 how should we understand authority? Do Christians have to obey authority and do so in love? (C f. Romans 13: 1 ff, I Peter 2:13–19).
5. In the husband–wife relationship should the same principle operate as between Christ and his church? If so, how? That is, are love and obedience simultaneous?

STUDY FOUR: LIVING OUR FAMILY LIFE

1. The Whole Matter of Human Sexuality.

Genesis 1:26ff, Genesis 2:18f, cf. Matthew 19:1ff, Ephesians 5:20 – 6:1–4, Genesis 5:1–2.

2. The Matter of Male–Female and the Image of God.

- (i) Genesis 1:26f, 5:1–2, of. Genesis 9:1f, I Corinthians 11:7. Psalm 8:3f.
- (ii) Leaving and cleaving. Genesis 2:18ff. Dangers of pre–marital relationships.
- (iii) Principle of parenthood in O.T. Meaning of honouring. Leviticus 19: 3, Deuteronomy 21:18–21, Exodus 20:12, Deuteronomy 5:16, 33, 6:2, * cf. Ephesians 6:1–4, Colossians 3:20, Hebrews 12:5–11, cf. Ephesians 5:1–2.
- (iv) Parenthood and sonship, i.e. being true parents and children in love. John 5:19f, Matthew 21:28–32, Luke 15:11–32, I John 4:20 – 5:1.
- (v) Brotherhood and relationships. Ephesians 5:1–2, cf. I John 4:20. I John 3:10ff, I John 2:7ff. Cain and Abel. Ishmael and Isaac. Esau and Jacob. Joseph and brothers. Prodigal son and elder brother. Cf. Ezekiel 18 : 1ff ,

3. The Total Healing of Relationships.

- (i) The Gospel brings the love of God to us. We are forgiven, free, relationally full, able to love and to give. (See Study 3).
- (ii) The Cross covers past guilts. It heals all hurts and wounds. It sets us free to forgive others and to live in wholesome relationships unhindered by the past.
- (iii) The Gospel helps us to grow and to mature so that our relationships within our home – families, extended family, and the Family of God are true relationships.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What is the true meaning of sexuality in Scripture, i.e. dual male–female action within the human race?
2. What forms of sexuality (so–called) are forbidden in Scripture? On what principle are they forbidden?
3. Why is the family the true unit of life and relationship in the Bible?
4. What are examples of good parenthood and deficient parenthood in the Bible? What can we learn from these for our lives today?
5. In what way can the Gospel help us (a) To escape from the failures of the past, (b) To have good family life now, (c) To live in the family of God.

STUDY FIVE: THE FAMILY OF THE FUTURE AND THE FUTURE OF THE FAMILY

SECTION ONE: THE FAMILY LOOKS TO THE FUTURE IN HOPE

1. Hope is a Great Dynamic and Power for Life in the Bible.

(i) God has planned His family. It is to be holy and blameless. See Ephesians 1:3ff. Matthew 5:8, cf. Hebrews 12:14. Revelation 7:14 shows us it will be holy. Revelation 20:1–5, 22f shows only the holy ones will enter the Holy City. Cf. II Peter 3:9–14.

(ii) The hope of holiness lies in the promise and the action of God. (a) II Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1, (b) I John 3:1–3. See also I Peter 1:14–17.

2. Jesus Encouraged Us to Think of the Future Home.

John 14:1–6. Matthew 25:31–34. Revelation 7:14, Revelation 21:1–5. See also Revelation chs. 2–3, especially 2:17, 3:12, 21:7.

3. The Future of the Family is Glorification.

(i) Ephesians 1:9–14. (ii) Romans 8:18–25. (iii) Romans 8:28–30. (iv) Philippians 3:21. (v) I Corinthians 2:6–10. (vi) I John 3:1–3, cf. II Corinthians 3:18, 4:16f.

4. Glorification Presupposes Resurrection.

(i) I Peter 1:3–5. (ii) I Corinthians 15:42f, (iii) Philippians 3:10–14, cf. Colossians 3:1–3.

5. The Inheritance is Part of the Future of the Family.

(a) The Inheritance of Glory and Eternal Life.

(i) Ephesians 1:14, 18. (ii) Matthew 5:5. (iii) Jews and Gentiles together. Ephesians 3:1–5. (iv) Galatians 3:26–29 = Romans 4:13. (v) Revelation 21: 7, cf. I Corinthians 3:21–23. We inherit God (Rom. 8:17, cf. 5:2), the earth (Matt. 5:5), the world (Rom. 4:13), all things (Rev. 21:7).

(b) Inheriting the Kingdom.

(i) Matthew 25:34. (ii) See I Corinthians 6:9, Galatians 5:21, Ephesians 5:5.

(iii) Requires persistence. See Acts 14:22, II Thessalonians 1:5.

SECTION TWO: THE FAMILY HAS ITS IMMEDIATE FUTURE – IN ACTION

1. Hope is a Present Power for Action.

Principle : I John 3:1–3, cf. II Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1, II Peter 3:9–14. See also Philippians 3:10–14.

2. The Family Works Together in God's Plan for Creation.

Genesis 1:28f, 9:1ff .

3. The Family Works Together in Proclaiming the Gospel.

Matthew 28:18–20, Mark 16:16f, Luke 24:44f, John 20:19–23, Acts 1:8. This is to bring in the whole family – Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles.

4. The Family Works in Love Within its Own Self. See Studies Three and Four.

5. The Family Works Together to Defeat Evil.

II Corinthians 10:3. Philippians 1:27–28, Ephesians 6:10–18, cf. Revelation 12:10f, I John 2:13–14, 4:4, 5:4. James 4:7; I Peter 5:6–9.

6. Conclusion.

The Family seeks to do the will of the Father and so know the true fulfilment of being His children and His family.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What do we mean by saying that hope is a great motivating power for life in God's Family and our own families?
2. What part does worship and service play in the life of the Father and His Family (c f. John 4: 21–24, Philippians 3: 3, Romans 12: 1–2, Hebrews 9:14, Revelation 7:14, etc.) ?
3. Discuss the relationship of resurrection, glorification, inheritance and the Kingdom of God. How do they inspire us to do the will of the Father – now?
4. What do you understand by the saying “The Family which is going nowhere is not going anywhere?” How much does having a (true) purpose figure in making good family life?

CONCLUSION TO THE FIVE STUDIES

We see that our true family life is lived richly and fully when we are all true children of God and members of His household or family. This means that when we do the Father's will we have come to terms with authority. This also means we have learned love and are learning to live together in love.

This indicates that we are growing in Christian maturity and therefore in human maturity. It means we are being prepared for the heavenly home, the eternal family.

We are not perfect. We fight many battles. Nevertheless He who has begun a good work in us will complete it (right up) until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6). This is what calls us in love to share the conflict and to love the Father and His people.

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